



A-level HISTORY 7042/2L

Component 2L Italy and Fascism, c1900–1945

Mark scheme

June 2025

Version: 1.0 Final



Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

No student should be disadvantaged on the basis of their gender identity and/or how they refer to the gender identity of others in their exam responses.

A consistent use of 'they/them' as a singular and pronouns beyond 'she/her' or 'he/him' will be credited in exam responses in line with existing mark scheme criteria.

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from [aqa.org.uk](https://www.aqa.org.uk)

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Supporting Marking Guidance

A separate Supporting Marking Guidance document has been created for use in this series and any future series.

It has been written by the senior examining team. It applies to all A-level History options. The purpose of the guidance is to clarify key aspects of the mark scheme and further ensure consistency of approach across all options. The guidance does not reflect a change in the standard applied, but clarification and amplification of the standard. We hope that the guidance document will aid you in your understanding of how the standard should be applied and deepen your understanding of how the key aspects of the mark scheme work. The Supporting Marking Guidance should always be used in conjunction with the mark scheme, and any relevant examiner standardising and teacher training material.

Examiners can find the Supporting Marking Guidance on the associate extranet.

Teachers can find the Supporting Marking Guidance alongside the current mark scheme on Centre Services on results day. It will also be published with any future assessment materials on the public website.

Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's answer read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the mark scheme.

Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity, you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level, you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly Level 3 with a small amount of Level 4 material it would be placed in Level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the Level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help. There will be an answer in the standardising materials which will correspond with each level of the mark scheme. This answer will have been awarded a mark by the Lead Examiner. You can compare the student's answer with the example to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse than the example. You can then use this to allocate a mark for the answer based on the Lead Examiner's mark on the example.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Section A

- 0 1** With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the support for Fascism in Italy in c1930.

[30 marks]

Target: AO2

Analyse and evaluate appropriate source material, primary and/or contemporary to the period, within the historical context.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Shows a very good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to present a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. The answer will convey a substantiated judgement. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **25–30**
- L4:** Shows a good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with an awareness of the historical context to provide a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. Judgements may, however, be partial or limited in substantiation. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **19–24**
- L3:** Shows some understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance together with some awareness of the historical context. There may, however, be some imbalance in the degree of breadth and depth of comment offered on all three sources and the analysis may not be fully convincing. The answer will make some attempt to consider the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **13–18**
- L2:** The answer will be partial. It may, for example, provide some comment on the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question but only address one or two of the sources, or focus exclusively on content (or provenance), or it may consider all three sources but fail to address the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **7–12**
- L1:** The answer will offer some comment on the value of at least one source in relation to the purpose given in the question but the response will be limited and may be partially inaccurate. Comments are likely to be unsupported, vague or generalist. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **1–6**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Students must deploy knowledge of the historical context to show an understanding of the relationship between the sources and the issues raised in the question, when assessing the significance of provenance, the arguments deployed in the sources and the tone and emphasis of the sources. Descriptive answers which fail to do this should be awarded no more than Level 2 at best. Answers should address both the value and the limitations of the sources for the particular question and purpose given.

Source A: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- the author is valuable because she was a visitor to Italy at the relevant time. She was a journalist who describes what she observed. Her journalistic skills are evident in the detail provided. The author shows a wider awareness of events in Italy, for example the Lateran Treaty
- the author appears to have no intended purpose other than to convey her reflections. The audience would be outside Italy, and the publication date suggests it is based on recent travel and memories
- the author has weaknesses. There is a hint of scepticism, but the author is taking events at face value, and shows little knowledge of how the election was conducted
- the emphasis is on the startling nature of the results. It quotes the figures to support this, suggesting that the results were 'outstanding'. The opposition was 'meagre', Fascism is 'attaining its goal'. The tone is admiring of the Fascists.

Content and argument

- the source argues that Fascism enjoyed considerable support at this time. This could be supported by the election of 1929 and the context of the Lateran Treaty
- the source argues that Fascism is uniting the nation, fulfilling its goal of unity, even totalitarianism. This could be supported in the context of Fascist social and economic institutions, education, and propaganda
- the source gives evidence of how Fascism promoted support and obedience, through the public display of results
- challenges to the source could be made in terms of the levels of intimidation used in the election, the role of coercion in Fascist society, for example censorship and the secret police, the possibility that the author is seeing only surface obedience ('for family reasons').

Source B: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- the author is one of the creators of Fascist ideology and so is valuable in defining what support for Fascism might mean. The date is immediately relevant
- the speech was given in public to a political audience. Gentile is casting doubt on the depth of support for Fascism, which is not what we might expect. This suggests his viewpoint has value
- a weakness of the source is that it is philosophical in nature. It gives no evidence to support its view, and describes an idealistic and ideological view of what support for Fascism would look like
- the emphasis of the source is on the unfinished Fascist takeover of the state. The tone is explanatory and instructive. It describes the limited support from those who only profess Fascist ideas 'with his lips', who are Fascist 'out of fear'. It calls on Italians to 'desire...a new powerful Fatherland'.

Content and argument

- the source argues that the level of commitment to Fascism among many Italians is lacking. This could be supported by the context of adherence to the regime for personal or career reasons
- the source suggests that the vast majority of Italians are now Fascist in name. This could be supported by the context of Fascist institutions, the recent election, the relationship with the Catholic Church
- the source warns against complacency and argues that the people must be encouraged to show more support for Fascism. This could be supported by the work of the institutions such as the Balilla, Dopolavoro, and education policy
- challenges to the source could be made in the unrealistic nature of the demands made by Gentile. It does not reflect experience of the people and such support could not be demonstrated. Coercion, censorship, and propaganda made it difficult to know what the Italian people truly felt.

Source C: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- the author is valuable because he is a direct witness. The author lived in Italy and experienced the regime as a young man. He describes his feelings as he remembered them
- the author is writing long after the events described. This is a strength because the account is free of possible interference by the Fascists. This is also a weakness of the source as it may have been influenced by subsequent events
- the author became a Communist in 1943. This could be a weakness of the source, as he became an opponent of Fascism long before writing this. It could also add value as evidence that support for Fascism in 1930 could change over time, and perhaps was not deep
- the emphasis of the source is how all-encompassing the Fascist state was in the 1930s, and how Fascist ideas had an impact on the youth but were not lasting. Fascism was ‘the only thing’ you heard. Fascist ideas ‘excited me’. It was a form of ‘righteousness’. It also reflects that it was a ‘terrible legacy’. The tone is defensive, perhaps apologetic.

Content and argument

- the source argues that Fascist propaganda was wide-ranging and all-encompassing at this time. This could be supported by knowledge of Fascist censorship and propaganda
- the source suggests that young men were attracted to Fascist ideas. It suggests that peer pressure was a part of this. This could be supported by the Balilla, and Fascist education policy, particularly in the training of young men for the military
- the source could be used to show that there was little opposition to Fascism in the early 1930s. This could be supported by the context of the police state, detention, and censorship
- the source is evidence that support for Fascism was not long-lasting, as the author became an opponent of Mussolini in 1943. Relevant context to support this would be the fall of Mussolini and the defeat of Italy in the Second World War
- the source could be challenged as an unrepresentative view, as the author became a Communist. This could be an attempt to justify his past behaviour and so might exaggerate the influence of Fascism. Relevant context would include the continued existence of opposition, the superficiality of many Italians’ support for Fascism.

Section B

0 2 'Giolitti's decision to invade Libya in 1911 weakened Italy in the years to 1914.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that Giolitti's decision to invade Libya in 1911 weakened Italy in the years to 1914 might include:

- the war weakened Italy economically. It proved to be a costly and prolonged conflict. The cost of the war was 1300m lire which was a burden on taxation and diverted government funds from domestic spending. Libya did not provide useful resources and the competition with Libyan agricultural produce reduced Italian crop prices
- the war weakened Italy militarily. It committed troops to North Africa, which weakened Italy in 1914 when the European war broke out. 50 000 troops were left to protect the colony, of the 70 000 who were sent. Italy only secured the coastal areas, and guerilla warfare against the Arab population continued after the peace treaty in 1912. Other European powers satirised 'Italiotta's' desperate search for colonies
- the war weakened Italy's existing international alliance and the balance of power. It was against the wishes of the Triple Alliance, as Germany and Austria were concerned that a weakened Ottoman empire would destabilise the Balkans. Italy was therefore partly detached from the Alliance, and Austria ignored Italy when making the ultimatum to Serbia in 1914
- the war weakened Italy politically. The Nationalists took credit for the initial success, gaining seats in 1913, and Giolitti's government took the blame for the later problems. The Socialists were opposed to the war and abandoned any cooperation with Giolitti's government. The extension of the franchise, as a response to conscription for war, made the parliament more unstable.

Arguments challenging the view that Giolitti's decision to invade Libya in 1911 weakened Italy in the years to 1914 might include:

- Italy gained a colony. Giolitti had ended Italy's colonial humiliation after the defeat at Adowa in 1896. Italy established its first colony by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1912. The war against the Ottomans was extended with the acquisition of islands in the Aegean Sea
- Italy was now a great power. The acquisition of a Mediterranean colony showed that Italy was a great power, alongside Britain and France. Italy had long sought influence in the region, 'Mare Nostrum'. Italy was now established as a Mediterranean power, having acted decisively to prevent the British and French domination of North Africa
- the war was popular in Italy. The invasion was initially successful and was greeted with a wave of patriotism. Italy was fulfilling its destiny after unification. The victory would 'make Italians'
- the war had some political benefits. The war was widely supported at first, and in the short term it strengthened Giolitti's position. The Catholic Church welcomed it as a crusade against Islam, the new Nationalist movement gave enthusiastic support, and even some socialists saw possible economic benefits in the colony.

Answers will show an understanding of the consequences of the Libyan War for Italy and for Giolitti and may conclude that it was a 'mixed blessing'. Giolitti had taken a gamble that the war would unite the country, strengthen Italy's international position, and quieten the demands of the growing nationalist movement. The war had unexpected consequences, particularly in that it was a prolonged conflict, provoked further conflict in the Balkans, and caused political instability in Italy. On the other hand, Giolitti had acted to forestall British and French expansion in North Africa and had demonstrated that Italy was a great power, with achievable colonial ambitions. The war loosened the ties of the Triple Alliance which ultimately led to Italy not intervening in the European War in 1914. Reward any supported attempt to address the question in the context of the weaknesses of Italy in the years 1911 to 1914.

- 0 3** 'It was the weakness of the opposition in 1922, rather than the strength of the Fascists, which enabled Mussolini to become Prime Minister.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that it was the weakness of the opposition in 1922, rather than the strength of the Fascists, which enabled Mussolini to become Prime Minister might include:

- the coalitions in government were not secure. Bonomi's government fell in February 1922. Facta's governments failed. Both were weak leaders. The weaknesses of 'trasformismo' had not been remedied. Giolitti did not get involved. Salandra offered Mussolini a post in the government, which he refused
- a weakness of the opposition to Mussolini was the willingness of the King to change his mind. He did not impose martial law when faced with the threat of the 'March on Rome' and instead appointed Mussolini as PM. Even though that threat was actually very small, the King was told that he could not rely on the support of the army
- the Socialists were opposed to Fascism but were a divided movement. The General Strike in the summer of 1922 was a disastrous failure. It was a boost to Fascist support and Fascist control of the provinces
- the Fascists were a weak political movement, with only 34 deputies in parliament. The movement was diverse. Mussolini was not in direct control of the Ras
- the 'March on Rome' was a failure. Only 10 000 assembled. Mussolini was so unsure of its success that he stayed in Milan and was appointed Prime Minister by telephone. The Fascists did not seize power, they were given it.

Arguments challenging the view that it was the weakness of the opposition in 1922, rather than the strength of the Fascists, which enabled Mussolini to become Prime Minister might include:

- the Fascists had taken control of many towns in the North and Centre of Italy, for example the Po Valley. The Ras had led squads from town to town, often with the support of the local police. The Fascists presented an intimidating threat by marching to Rome
- Mussolini's leadership brought unity to the Fascist movement in 1922. Following his 'dual policy', he both encouraged squad violence and secured the support of the elites, including the army and the Church. In a speech at Udine in September 1922 he promised to work with the monarchy
- the Fascists promised strong government after the years of political instability. Mussolini said, 'we intend to govern Italy'. The violence of the squads had defeated the strikes and brought order to provincial Italy. The vagueness of Fascist ideology created a broad support
- the King was acting constitutionally and had few other options due the collapse of the Liberal government. Mussolini as Prime Minister was given only 4 Fascist posts in the government, and the expectation was that Italian democracy would soon return to 'normal'
- Mussolini did not need to use force. The squads created the threat of force. The 'March on Rome' was a triumph of Fascist propaganda which only took place after Mussolini's appointment.

Answers will focus on the events leading to the 'March on Rome' and the appointment of Mussolini. It could be argued that the Fascists did not seize power but rather the Liberal government collapsed into Mussolini's hands. The actions of the King could support this, as well as the support given to Fascism by the elites. The Fascist emphasis on the 'March on Rome' was to create the illusion of a revolutionary seizure of power. Alternatively, it could be argued that Mussolini had become the figurehead of a national movement which promised strong government and an end to the instability of the post-war years. The strength of the Fascist movement, which included violence and propaganda, intimidated the opposition. References to the developing political conflict in the years before 1922 can be credited if they are explicitly linked to the events of 1922.

- 0 4** To what extent was Mussolini personally responsible for the failures of Italy's war effort in the years 1940 to 1943?

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

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- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that Mussolini was personally responsible for the failures of Italy's war effort in the years 1940 to 1943 might include:

- it was Mussolini's decision to enter the war in 1940. He had thought it would be a short war, having anticipated the fall of France and a rapid German victory. Italy was not ready for a protracted war. The King and the foreign minister, Ciano, and many Italians were unenthusiastic about the war
- Mussolini was 'supreme commander' and held many significant roles, including minister for war, for the navy, and the air force. He failed to control or coordinate and there were no clear lines of command. In 1940 the Italian air force bombed their own ships
- Mussolini insisted on being involved in strategy and made disastrous decisions, for example the decision to attack Greece in 1940 and to commit troops to the Russian front in 1941
- Mussolini believed his own propaganda and thought the Italian forces far more powerful than they were. He was isolated by his failing health and became increasingly out of touch with the reality of Italy's situation. Mussolini had regarded the pre-war military parades as merely for show
- the Grand Council resolution in 1943 specifically blamed Mussolini for the military failures and called for an end to the one-man dictatorship.

Arguments challenging the view that Mussolini was personally responsible for the failures of Italy's war effort in the years 1940 to 1943 might include:

- the Italian economy had not developed sufficiently to support the war effort. Italy lacked raw materials and the war caused more shortages due to lack of imports. Food shortages caused social unrest and disillusionment. There was a lack of support for the war effort
- Italy's armed forces were not sufficiently prepared for war. There never were '8 million bayonets'. Italy was lacking in, for example, rifles, tanks, anti-aircraft guns, aircraft carriers, and fuel
- Italy had an unequal and dependent relationship with Hitler's Germany. Germany took more resources from Italy than it supplied, for example 350 000 workers in 1942
- the military failures reflected the longer-term failure of the Fascist 'revolution'. The Italian people were not committed to the war. The regime had been already losing support before 1940 because of the radicalisation policies.

Answers will show an understanding of the reasons for Italy's military failures to 1943, and of the nature of Mussolini's Fascist dictatorship. It could be argued that Mussolini alone took Italy into the war, because of his ideology and his poor assessment of the international situation. He then continued to interfere in strategy and was blind to the realities of the situation. On the other hand, Italy's failures could be interpreted as the longer-term failure of the economy and the lack of natural resources. The relationship with Germany and the weakness of Fascist support were also significant. These aspects could be, to a degree, attributed to Mussolini.